

**INTERNATIONAL LONGSHORE AND WAREHOUSE UNION**  
**PACIFIC COAST PENSIONERS ASSOCIATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**  
**LABOR ARCHIVES OF WASHINGTON**  
**UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON LIBRARIES SPECIAL COLLECTIONS**  
**NICK BUCKLES OF ILWU LOCAL 32 and ILWU LOCAL 52, PCPA**

**INTERVIEWEE:** NICK BUCKLES

**INTERVIEWERS:** HARVEY SCHWARTZ, CONOR CASEY

**SUBJECTS:** LABOR IN EVERETT, WA; 1971 STRIKE; EVERETT MASSACRE; BUSINESS MANAGER DUTIES; WELFARE DIRECTOR; PACIFIC COAST PENSIONERS ASSOCIATION; BOEING; UNION SOLIDARITY; ACCIDENTS AND DEATHS ON THE WATERFRONT

**LOCATION:** 2017 PACIFIC COAST PENSIONERS ASSOCIATION CONVENTION, LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA

**DATE:** SEPTEMBER 17, 2017

**INTERVIEW LENGTH:** 01:07:49

**FILE NAME:** BucklesNick\_PCPA\_2017\_Video\_acc6194-005.mp4

[00:00:00] **HARVEY SCHWARTZ:** Good morning. This is Harvey Schwartz. We're in Long Beach, California. It is September 17, 2017. This is part of the PCPA Oral History Project, and we're with Nick Buckles this morning. Nick, can you give me your date of birth and your place of birth?

[00:00:31] **NICK BUCKLES:** I was born in Seattle, Washington on December 10, 1942.

[00:00:40] **HARVEY:** Tell me something about your youth and your parents. Where did your parents come from?

[00:00:45] **NICK:** My parents divorced when I was a little, little baby and I was raised by my aunt and uncle in Everett, Washington. They were Greek immigrants and I had a wonderful home and a wonderful life there.

[00:01:04] **HARVEY:** Did you grow up in Everett?

[00:01:06] **NICK:** Yes, I grew up in Everett my entire life, my 74 years.

[00:01:12] **HARVEY:** Can you spell your name?

[00:01:15] **NICK:** B-U-C-K-L-E-S.

[00:01:17] **HARVEY:** Tell me a little bit about your youth. What was it like growing up in Everett?

[00:01:25] **NICK:** A very nice community. I had a lot of fun. Played sports as a youngster. As I grew into my teens, my uncle was a shoemaker—he had a shoemaker’s shop—and he also cleaned the Everett Trust and Savings Bank, and I would go there after school and help him clean the bank, which was very interesting. It did keep me out of playing sports in high school, except I did wrestle in high school.

[00:01:59] **HARVEY:** What division?

[00:02:01] **NICK:** 112 pounds, and I can’t say that anymore. [laughing]

[00:02:15] **HARVEY:** Your uncle and aunt were raising you?

[00:02:17] **NICK:** Yes, they raised me.

[00:02:20] **HARVEY:** What was their background? Were they involved in unions or politics or anything like that?

[00:02:25] **NICK:** No. Like I say, he was a shoemaker, and he did belong to the union. I believe it was a culinary union, because I know when he died in 1977 at the age of 88, we had to go to the AFL-CIO union hall in Everett, and he had a \$500 death benefit.

[00:02:49] **HARVEY:** If he was a shoemaker, how come he was in the culinary union?

[00:02:54] **NICK:** I believe it was a culinary union. I’m not positive. But it was some little union that he paid monthly dues to. We never even knew that it was there.

[00:03:05] **HARVEY:** Did he talk about union issues?

[00:03:07] **NICK:** No, not much. But you have to remember, Everett was a milltown. It had like five mills, and they all were union, so Everett was really a union town.

[00:03:21] **HARVEY:** Were your youth friends involved in unions, in the mill unions?

[00:03:26] **NICK:** Their parents were.

[00:03:27] **HARVEY:** So it was kind of your growing up, in a sense?

[00:03:38] **NICK:** Yeah.

[00:03:38] **HARVEY:** Where did you go to high school?

[00:03:39] **NICK:** I went to high school at Everett High School and graduated in 1961. Number one in the state in football, by the way. [laughing]

[00:03:50] **HARVEY:** But you didn’t play football?

[00:03:52] **NICK:** No, I didn’t play football.

[00:03:56] **HARVEY:** Any military experience?

[00:03:57] **NICK:** Yes, I served in US Army from 1962 to 1968. But I was a reservist six months. That was during the Vietnam thing, so we were on standby and meeting three weekends a month.

[00:04:23] **HARVEY:** What was your military occupation specialty?

[00:04:25] **NICK:** At that time, bridge building.

[00:04:27] **HARVEY:** Where did you do basic training?

[00:04:32] **NICK:** Fort Ord, California for two months, and my last four months was at Fort Knox, Kentucky.

[00:04:40] **HARVEY:** Is that where they taught you how to build a bridge?

[00:04:41] **NICK:** No. Actually, I was in the tank brigade, which was interesting.

[00:04:49] **HARVEY:** How did you go from being a tanker to a bridge builder?

[00:04:52] **NICK:** When I came back home to Everett from Kentucky, the reserve unit was a bridge company, so that's what we went into.

[00:05:01] **HARVEY:** What was your feeling about the war in Vietnam at that time?

[00:05:10] **NICK:** Confusing I guess would be the best word for me. My best friend, and more like my brother, went through OCS and became a second lieutenant and then a captain, and went over to Vietnam and spent two tours of duty over there. In fact, he just got back from Washington, DC they had a reunion of all the officers and Vietnam vets.

[00:05:39] **HARVEY:** I'm thinking more about the politics of the 1960s. Did you have any perspective on whether the war was a good idea, a bad idea?

[00:05:49] **NICK:** No, I didn't. I didn't think it was bad. I know at one time we had to build a bridge over the Seattle Coliseum—they had a big fountain there. I don't know if you've been to Seattle at the Fair there and they had a big fountain, and we built bridges over these fountains. But people were marching with signs and calling us "killers" and all these things. We tried to explain to them I was working at Scott Paper Company at that time, but I was a weekend warrior more or less.

[00:06:29] **HARVEY:** You say you worked for Scott Paper Company at that time?

[00:06:32] **NICK:** Yeah, when I got out of high school, I went in and worked for Scott Paper Company for two years and went to Everett Junior College at that time for two years. I left there in 1964 and went to Anchorage, Alaska. My uncle owned a construction company up there and I worked construction til 1967, the start of it. I came back looking for a job and that's where I started my longshore [career] .

[00:07:08] **HARVEY:** Any union activity when you were up in Alaska?

[00:07:10] **NICK:** Yes, had to pay union dues up there as a laborer.

[00:07:14] **HARVEY:** Was that the Laborers' International Union?

[00:07:16] **NICK:** Yes.

[00:07:20] **HARVEY:** What did you think about that union? What did you think about your union experience in Alaska, if there was one.

[00:07:25] **NICK:** It's not like our union, because they came and got the dues but it wasn't like we went to a union meeting. In fact, I never did go to one and I didn't know anything about it. I was 22 then, I think.

[00:07:43] **HARVEY:** It is very different from our union.

[00:07:45] **NICK:** Yeah, they just wanted the dues and it wasn't about strengthening your union or keeping the jobs. But construction, in those days, was very, very heavy up in the Alaska territory. We worked over in Kenai, Big Lake, and Anchorage at Elmendorf Air Force Base.

[00:08:08] **HARVEY:** What were you constructing?

[00:08:10] **NICK:** We were building officers' quarters at Elmendorf Air Force Base. Then we went from that job to piledriving, putting in transform towers, and the Cook Inlet, from Mount Alyeska to Homer.

[00:08:33] **HARVEY:** Then you come back to Everett in 67. Then what do you do?

[00:08:47] **NICK:** Not much. I had a lot of money from Alaska and I really wasn't looking for a job, but all of a sudden it dawned on me—I came back in January, and in about March or April—I've got to go back to work. I was drawing unemployment. I wanted to go back to work, but I didn't know what I wanted to do. A friend of mine said, "Why don't you come and play fastpitch softball with us?" I was a pretty good softball player at that time, so I went back and was playing for a different team, and he said, "No, you need to come and play for the longshoremens." So he introduced me to the business agent, dispatcher, and he asked me if I wanted to play and I said I was already playing. He said, "That's fine." So I went to about five or six dispatches and never made a job and couldn't figure out why. I finally got the message that if I wanted to be longshoring, I'd better go play second base for the longshoremens. So, that's what I did. I went to play second base, and we had a great team. Went to state four or five years in a row. Great experience. That's how I started my career.

Actually, my first job was on May 28, 1967 on the Kanoshima Maru, the number one hatch, which was a log ship. In those days, logs came in one or two at a time exactly how they grow, and my first day on the job, I thought, I had to go over the top of the hatch, down the ladder, shaking all the way down. The first loads that came in, like I say, the trees came in as they grew, and banging all over the coaming of the ships. And I'm thinking, whoa, do I really want this job? [laughing] But I stuck with it and it's the greatest thing I ever did.

[00:10:54] **HARVEY:** That first day, how do you know what you're supposed to do on the job?

[00:10:59] **NICK:** At those times, in the older days on the log ships, they had six men in the hold, but they put three down at a time. They had what they called a bull machine up there. You'd take a log and you'd wrap the sling around it, tighten it up, and then put it through a shackle, roller shackle, up to the deal. And the guy would pull it and the log would suck it back or suck it forward. That's how you did it in those days. Not like modern days, where you take a bundle in, you boom down, you get it where you want it. That's why we had to bull everything, wires and shackles, and there was noise and wires breaking and popping.

[00:11:48] **HARVEY:** How did you figure out what to do the first day? Did somebody tell you?

[00:11:53] **NICK:** Yeah, the two guys I worked with. I worked in a Port Gamble gang, in fact, and the two guys just said, "Stand by, kid, and we'll show you." They showed me and then they'd say, "Grab ahold of that wire and bring it over here and put it in the old snatch block." And that's how I learned.

[00:12:10] **HARVEY:** About how many loads would be done a day at that time?

[00:12:14] **NICK:** Well, nowadays they can do a full load log ship, which are bigger than the old days, in four or five days. I worked on the White Cross for 31 days to complete that. Yeah, it took a month to unload that.

[00:12:34] **HARVEY:** Was there any danger to that work?

[00:12:40] **NICK:** Oh, yeah. Lots.

[00:12:42] **HARVEY:** How so? Can you explain it?

[00:12:45] **NICK:** Just wires busting, logs rolling. Even nowadays, it's dangerous. Now they come in with bundles and you've got to cut wires and bands. Some of the younger guys aren't careful. I learned to get careful real quick. But I think the older days, you saw more injuries—more broken legs, more cuts, gashes, whatever. Now, with the tonnage and the weight they're bringing in, I think you see more deaths, and I think that's proven up and down the coast in all our industry.

[00:13:29] **HARVEY:** Did you ever get hurt on the job?

[00:13:31] **NICK:** Yes.

[00:13:32] **HARVEY:** How did that come about?

[00:13:34] **NICK:** 1982, I had a bundle break on me, and all the logs just took off like this. I just went flat, just waiting for a log to roll on me, but it didn't. But I had two vertebrae that were injured and I had back surgery in 1982. In 1992, I slipped on a log and another one tightened up on my knee. I had knee surgery. In 1985, something snapped, and I forget what it was, I got this [left] shoulder, so I had shoulder surgery.

[00:14:27] **HARVEY:** Did you work just logs?

[00:14:29] **NICK:** Oh, no.

[00:14:29] **HARVEY:** What other kind of cargo?

[00:14:33] **NICK:** Back in the old days, when I started on the log ships, working the log ships, they also had a lot of pulp. We had Weyerhaeuser, a lot of 450-pound bales of pulp. We used to have hooks and stow them and wing them up. Winging them up means rolling or picking them up, the four corners of these 450-pound bales, and just keep building them up, building them up, and do the wings and up in the trunks. Then we worked what they called fletchers, which are 12 x 12 raw lumber that are anywhere from 10 to 40 feet long. Those are all hand-stowed.

[00:15:19] **HARVEY:** How do you hand-stow fletchers?

[00:15:21] **NICK:** You seen PVs, flipping them over and keep rolling them and rolling them. It was a good job. It's just a good job. It was a lot of fun in those days because everybody worked together. It made a stronger union. Everybody saw each other. Modernization and mechanization took over and you kind of separated where you didn't see everybody every day like you used to.

[00:15:57] **HARVEY:** Any other kind of cargo that you worked that you recall?

[00:16:00] **NICK:** Oh, module homes, we loaded a lot of module homes. But we were mainly—at certain times, we'd have like nine log ships in the port at one time. The fletchers, the pulp, we had steel.

[00:16:16] **HARVEY:** Did you work along steel?

[00:16:20] **NICK:** Not a lot in Everett, but we did work some, yeah.

[00:16:23] **HARVEY:** What's that like?

[00:16:26] **NICK:** Dangerous. Slippery. Of course, if a piece of steel hits you, it's not just going to bruise you, it's going to hurt you. And we used to do a lot of ingots, aluminum ingots, which was, I thought, one of the better jobs.

[00:16:46] **HARVEY:** How come?

[00:16:46] **NICK:** Because they just landed them. They'd bring them in and just land them right down. The ingots might be maybe this wide, this tall, and they were kind of like a T shape, like this. There would be like six of them in a row, and they'd pick up all six of them and land them down in there. And after the first floor—because they'd be different sizes or whatever—we'd put down dunnage and level it out for the second floor to come on in.

[00:17:28] **HARVEY:** Before we go on to something else that I was going to ask you about, Everett has a long tradition of labor activity going back to 1916, that period of time. Did you know very much about that? Did you hear much about it?

[00:17:41] **NICK:** No, not a lot about it until I got kind of in the union, and started coming to San Francisco and reading things in the libraries and stuff. But I didn't know a lot about it, no.

[00:17:56] **HARVEY:** When was that? When did you start to get active?

[00:18:00] **NICK:** Mainly in about 1986 when I became a caucus delegate.

[00:18:11] **HARVEY:** Going back just a little bit, there was a strike in 1971. Do you remember the 71 strike?

[00:18:23] **NICK:** Oh, yes.

[00:18:24] **HARVEY:** What do you remember of that?

[00:18:26] **NICK:** Well, no work. [laughing] A lot of picket lines, a lot of picket duty. I can remember a bunch of us used to go up in the woods, cut down cedar trees that we really weren't supposed to do. But we'd take them to the mills up in Granite Falls above Everett and sell them to make money. Three of us did that, and worked very hard doing this. A lot of it, you get permission by the forestry to go ahead and cut this, cut this. We were lucky to get like \$30 a day apiece, but it bought groceries for our families.

[00:19:10] **HARVEY:** Were you married by then?

[00:19:12] **NICK:** Yes. Had a baby.

[00:19:21] **HARVEY:** Did you economically get on okay? Was it adequate?

[00:19:24] **NICK:** No, but my wife and I had saved, because there was a lot of feast or famine. If you wanted to live paycheck to paycheck, it wasn't the smartest thing to do. So we tried to put a little away, but it was tough.

In those days, I think, in the 80s there, we were paying like \$150 a month rent, and if you're only going to bring home \$40 from cutting some woods every day . . . but we made it. But that was a long strike. I think it was 134 days.

[00:20:07] **HARVEY:** Yeah, it was a long strike. Taft-Hartley injunction and so forth slowed it.

[00:20:10] **NICK:** Right.

[00:20:19] **HARVEY:** You became a delegate to a convention in 1986.

[00:20:23] **NICK:** Right.

[00:20:24] **HARVEY:** What were you doing before that to become a delegate, and then how did you get involved?

[00:20:27] **NICK:** I was just on the hold list and the little deck list and line boards and those things, so I did a multitude of things. Took a lot of forklift jobs. Then in 86, I became the caucus delegate, 87 I became an assistant dispatcher.

[00:20:53] **HARVEY:** Were you doing anything special to become the assistant dispatcher? What kind of activity were you involved in?

[00:21:03] **NICK:** That was just dispatching the gangs out. We had a 15-gang port and dispatching in the morning and at night. We had lots of work in those days. Everett was a very busy, busy port. We had probably approximately 150 members at that time. I was the assistant from 86 to, I want to say, 1991. Then I became the business agent in 1991. The business agent in our local more or less ran everything, and plus he dispatched, and I had an assistant dispatcher at that time.

[00:21:47] **HARVEY:** What convinced you to run for office the first time?

[00:21:52] **NICK:** I really wanted to do it. I saw what was going on and I wanted to do that, so I ran for it and won the election. I guess they must have liked me because they kept voting for me. [chuckles]

[00:22:09] **HARVEY:** So, you're BA from 1991 for how long?

[00:22:15] **NICK:** You mean the business agent?

[00:22:19] **HARVEY:** Yeah.

[00:22:21] **NICK:** Until September 16, 1996. That's when I became the Washington Area Benefits Director. I took that job.

[00:22:35] **HARVEY:** Got it. What do you do as a business agent?

[00:22:40] **NICK:** More or less run the local.

[00:22:43] **HARVEY:** What does that mean?

[00:22:44] **NICK:** That means dispatch, collect dues, do all the banking, deal with the employers. But I always made sure when I dealt with the employers that I took at least one LRC with me. You don't want to make any

decisions by yourself because they'll come back to bite you. I swept the floor, I mopped it, whatever we had to do.

[00:23:16] **HARVEY:** Do you remember any particular incident in dealing with employers, any high point incident that you recall? Was there any big situation?

[00:23:24] **NICK:** With the employers?

[00:23:25] **HARVEY:** Yeah, in dealing with the employers.

[00:23:27] **NICK:** You know, we had pretty good relationships in Everett. We were a small port. There wasn't many things to argue about. We knew what we had to do. The log ships were coming in. We had some containers start maybe in the middle of 1994. Then manning got changed, and not being a container port, we had to get ahold of Seattle and Tacoma to find out what manning we should be doing and stuff like that. At that time, SSA gave us a little beef about how many extra men we should have, and I told them, "We're going to hire men as needed after the basic gang." So we'd look at the ships—some were really old and the lashing or the delashing was a lot more than the basic could do, so I'd go down and say, "We need one or two or three more extra men." At one point, there was a great big argument on the docks, so I just told everybody to stop the loading until we get this figured out. And it only took about five minutes and we got the three extra men.

[00:24:51] **HARVEY:** That's interesting. In 96, you become the Benefits Director. How did that come about?

[00:25:07] **NICK:** The person who had the job prior to when I took over was John Waddell, and he was from our local also. He asked me if I would be interested because I did it in our local. That's another thing I did as a business agent is take care of the health and welfare in our local, but when there was a problem, then we would call the Benefits Director, who was John. So when he went to retire, he came and asked me if I thought I would like to do that job. I thought about it and thought about, and the only thing I didn't like about it was I had to drive to Seattle every day. But at that time, the traffic wasn't really, really bad like it is now. So I says, "Let me come down and go to work with you for a couple of days just to see what happens." That's what I did, and I thought, you know, I think I really like that.

Also the work was really starting to decline, the logs were at that time. Then, all of a sudden, guys are just hanging around the hall and they're all griping and they're fussy because all of a sudden, they're sitting and they're not working. So, I took the interview. I forget how many guys and a couple gals put in for it the job, and I got picked. I came down to San Francisco for an interview and was picked, and I found out it was a tremendous job. I mean, the things you're able to do for your membership to help the actives and a lot of the pensioners that needed things. A lot of things I got, PMA [Pacific Maritime Association] didn't like, but I didn't care because our membership needed it and I went and got it.

[00:26:57] **HARVEY:** What kind of things did you have to go after hard?

[00:27:00] **NICK:** There were things like electric wheelchairs, scooters to get around in. There was a big issue on ramps for people to get into their houses and stuff. I think I was the first one to get ramps. One of our brothers went to Hawaii bodysurfing and ended up being paralyzed this way all from down. So we got him the scooters and everything, and I went over to his house. He lived in Shoreline, which is maybe 10, 12 miles north of Everett. So I went over to his house and looked at it and his scooter wouldn't go through the door in the kitchen, his scooter wouldn't go through the door in the bathroom, the bedroom. So I had a company come and put ramps. He had a rambler so they put ramps all around his house and down so he could get in the car—his wife could get him in the car—and we widened the doors in the kitchen, bathroom, bedroom, and made it so he



could live. That was all paid by the benefit plans. That was one of the first, and some people weren't real happy about it and they weren't on our union's side.

[00:28:22] **HARVEY:** Can you describe that relationship, how you got the PMA [Pacific Maritime Association] to agree to concede?

[00:28:29] **NICK:** I went through case management. Case management at that time, we could order things like home healthcare, getting these things like the ramps and the scooters that people needed, so I would go through them. In my time, we started out with about six different case manager nurses, and the nurse we had there, I sent pictures and information about what had gone and so she okayed it. I don't think the employers were too happy about it, but it needed to be done, and so we got it done. Then I can remember there was a beef—I think it was in Los Angeles, I'm not sure—and the employers at that time said they had never, ever paid for ramps. So they called me down to San Francisco and I gave them the paperwork that we had. I don't know today if they could get that because they've really changed case management as it used to be.

[00:29:47] **HARVEY:** In what sense?

[00:29:49] **NICK:** They've cut off home healthcare, they've cut off the ramps deals, they've cut off a multitude of things. It's just completely different than when I started. Of course, I was 71 when I retired, so it was time for me to go anyway.

[00:30:07] **HARVEY:** What year did you retire?

[00:30:11] **NICK:** August 1, 2014.

[00:30:25] **HARVEY:** What about the 2002 lockout?

[00:30:32] **NICK:** I was the Benefits Director.

[00:30:38] **HARVEY:** Did you have any involvement with the 2002 lockout with what the union was doing?

[00:30:43] **NICK:** Not much because I was in there trying to make sure everybody got what they needed, their medicines—because we still had benefits. Even though we were locked out, we didn't lose our benefits. So I really didn't have time to go down and stand in front of the gates, but I would have.

[00:31:07] **HARVEY:** I'm sure of that. Any outside politics, that is to say, were you involved in any other, like the Democratic Party or any community activity through all these years?

[00:31:19] **NICK:** I coached Little League baseball for 40 years, and I was president in North Everett for four years. The rest of my career was coaching, and then I took a stint there for about five years of umpiring.

[00:31:45] **HARVEY:** What were your president of?

[00:31:48] **NICK:** North Everett Little League.

[00:31:49] **HARVEY:** But no other kinds of politics with the Democratic Party or any of that sort of thing?

[00:31:58] **NICK:** No. I helped a lady and another gentleman that ran for port commissioner. I worked on their campaigns. In fact, right now there's an opening for the port commissioner. I put my name in there and we're going to see what's going to happen. They've got 90 days to fill that position.

[00:32:19] **HARVEY:** Is that an elected position?

[00:32:22] **NICK:** No. One of the port commissioners moved back to Massachusetts—they have three in Everett—and so the process will be in 90 days, you fill out the online application [and] try to reach out and get some solid citizens in your community to get behind you. The competition is going to be pretty tough because there's a couple of big-time Boeing guys that want to get in there, and the Port of Everett does a lot of work with Boeing. All the airplane parts go through Everett. They get right at the terminal there, and then on to the rail and right up the tracks, right up the hill right into Boeing. When the port does that much business with somebody, they might have a hard time saying no to them. [laughing] But the appointment will come from the two remaining commissioners. I've rounded up some very good people in Everett. Two of the ladies that are running for mayor right now that are in the finals are on my side, and I've got some of the boat warehouses, Anthony's Home Port restaurant down there. You get letters from those people, and my knowledge of being on the waterfront for 48 years, I think I've got a good chance.

[00:33:59] **HARVEY:** This might seem like a naive question, but I want to hear, in your words, why you want to be a port commissioner.

[00:34:05] **NICK:** It's my community. That port's been my life, and I want to make sure that it stays healthy. I have a young son that's 28 that's a longshoreman right now, and if I can help in any way . . . and there's big things going on in the Port of Everett right now. There's some vacant property that would be very good if Longshore [ILWU Local?] could use that property. They just bought two and a half more acres. There's only like 70 acres at the Port of Everett right now, which isn't a lot when you talk about maybe getting an auto ship in there. We got one in there a couple months ago, but to store 2,000 cars on 65 acres, you don't have much left. So I'm hoping that we can get this property and use it for industry part of the port. And there's other things going on in the north end of the port. They're talking about shopping centers and condos, which we couldn't use in our industry anyway. I can't go into being a port commissioner just for Longshore, it's a vision with the whole port. And if you don't do that then don't run for the job is my feeling.

[00:35:31] **HARVEY:** The wider vision. You were married some time ago, and your son is now 28 years old?

[00:35:39] **NICK:** Yeah. I have one 28 and one 48. [chuckles] We wanted a babysitter.

[00:35:48] **HARVEY:** That's a big span. What's the 48-year-old do?

[00:35:51] **NICK:** He's a car salesman at Roy Robinson in Marysville.

[00:35:55] **HARVEY:** And the one who's 28, is he registered?

[00:35:59] **NICK:** He's B-registered.

[00:36:01] **HARVEY:** As I recall, didn't your first wife pass away in 2007?

[00:36:10] **NICK:** Yes.

[00:36:11] **HARVEY:** And you remarried.

[00:36:16] **NICK:** Yeah, I remarried Tammy. On November 28, it will be five years.

[00:36:27] **HARVEY:** She has quite a background on the waterfront, too, doesn't she? She's been involved?

[00:36:32] **NICK:** Well, her husband, who passed away—him and I were very good friends—he was a fisherman. He used to work on the waterfront—we were casuals, we worked together—and we grew up together, him and I, since we were eight, nine, 10 years old, I can't remember now. Great guy. He got cancer and died. So, the two widowers got together and got married. [laughing]

[00:37:02] **HARVEY:** Sure. What was your first wife's name?

[00:37:05] **NICK:** Linda.

[00:37:07] **HARVEY:** The two boys' names?

[00:37:09] **NICK:** Nick and Bret.

[00:37:11] **HARVEY:** Which one is the younger one?

[00:37:14] **NICK:** Bret.

[00:37:24] **HARVEY:** You sound very busy in retirement. Is there anything else you do in retirement?

[00:37:27] **NICK:** I try to get about three or four days of golf in. [laughing]

[00:37:41] **HARVEY:** What moved you to become active in the Pensioners Association?

[00:37:46] **NICK:** When I was the business, the Pensioners used to meet at our hall, and quite a few of them would come from Seattle. In fact, our president was a retired Seattle longshoreman. I used to set the hall up for them, and make coffee, and go to Safeway to get donuts so that had this, and they always appreciated that. They had maybe 20 to 30 members at that time. Then all of a sudden, the older people started to pass away and go away, and then it just stopped, so there was no Pension [ers] Club there. They kept a charter but nobody was ever there.

As the Benefits Director, you go around to all the locals to the pension meetings and stuff and meet with these people. And I thought, you know, I need to get Everett's old-timers back. So I called dispatch and I said, "Why don't you call all the retired guys and tell them to be in the hall on Monday at 5:00." He says, "What for?" "Just tell them we've got health and welfare problems." They brought their wives. [chuckles] That hall was filled up. They said, "What's the problem?" I said, "The problem is we don't have a Pensioners Club anymore." "That's what you called us here for?" "That's exactly it."

Today now we have about 45 members. We just had a big barbecue—the actives had a big barbecue for them—last Thursday. Had oysters, crab, salmon, clams, clam chowder—everything—and many libations for the guys. [laughing] And so that's how we really got it back going again, and it's going good. We're still working on some of the guys. And I see in other clubs, too, that some of the guys are retiring and just going away. The Pensioners are very, very important to this industry. Always have been.

[00:40:11] **HARVEY:** Why do you say that?

[00:40:14] **NICK:** If there's a picket line, they're there for you. They're the first ones in line. If there's someplace that maybe the actives shouldn't be, we can be there, and we are there. A lot of times, my local now, I think the senior guy in that local, the dispatcher, has got about 20-some years and maybe two other guys. Other than that, it's like nine years of seniority and they're A men, and 14 B men. They call, "What do we do here? What do we do here? What happened there?" And I love what Tacoma does. I love this young workers thing they've got going, so I want to try to set this up in my local to get our Pensioners active working with

these younger guys, so they can understand what this union's about, because they don't know right now. They need to know those wonderful benefits they've got, they need to know how we got them, and they've got to need to know how we're going to keep them. But it's hard to pound that into some of these young heads. I try to do it for my own son. At least he understands because he was raised in a union house.

[00:41:37] **HARVEY:** Of course. Conor, do you have any questions? Does anything come to mind?

[00:41:50] **CONOR CASEY:** Yeah, it seems like the ILWU has been involved in a lot of international solidarity work, and supporting other unions, like UFW [United Farm Workers of America] and the South African apartheid thing. Do you have any involvement—either your local or you—in some of those campaigns in assisting in other worker struggles?

[00:42:12] **NICK:** I think the local did things. When I was in Seattle, I missed out on a lot of those things because when I was the Welfare Director, you're down there, so a lot of things that came into the locals, I didn't get to see. I knew a lot about it because I went to caucuses as an Area Director. The Area Directors will be at this convention for the Pensioners. But if I said I knew a lot about it, no, I did not. If there was a contribution, I'm quite sure I made contributions, because I still had to pay dues and any assessments.

[00:42:57] **HARVEY:** Anything else?

[00:43:00] **CONOR:** I'm kind of curious about the experience of being in a port like Everett. Seattle and Tacoma seem like they're often working collaboration, but also competing for business, and I'm just curious about what it's like to be in a port in the same region and what the experience of that is [to be] part of the same international union, but also sort of trying to specialize in different cargo and stuff.

[00:43:22] **NICK:** If you look in Seattle and Tacoma, you see big cranes. If you look in Everett, you see two cranes, and they just got there not too many years ago. All our stuff was shipboard cranes—logs, pulp, lumber—most of it was done by that. Then we got a Manitowoc crane. Everybody used to get excited about it and I used to tell them, “Don't get too excited because I never like a crane that's on wheels because that means they can leave in a hurry.”

But now we have two of those cranes, and we got a new crane that barges can go in between it. They go down and pick up, and Boeing is a real big customer. Every day, a barge comes in with fuselages, million-dollar parts to all these planes, and [they're] put on railcars and it's shipped up the hill to the Boeing plant. Boeing is a big customer of Everett. So we don't compete with Seattle. Seattle never did logs—Tacoma does—but as far as containers, we didn't start getting the containers til the Boeing started. Maybe a ship or two, we'd have two or three containers on the dock, but we were not a container port.

[00:44:56] **CONOR:** Just one other question. Harvey asked something about the long labor history of Everett. It seems a lot of that had to do with the lumber industry and extractive-type industry, mining and sawmills and stuff. Do you know what the Everett local's role was in stuff like the Everett Massacre or the Seattle General Strike and other really big labor things? Did they send [unintelligible 00:45:36?] Did they participate? How did they work on that?

[00:45:21] **NICK:** Yeah, I believe they did. We used to have a guy named Orey Schwartz. I don't know if he was a relative of yours. Great guy. And he'd come down, sit in the hall and tell us about all these things, and the Wobblies and about all these things. I'm not real knowledgeable about what was going on, but we were involved. Everett, I think we just celebrated—not just, we had a 100-year anniversary not too long ago—and

Ricky Smith, who owns SSA [Marine] , came to that thing and funded the whole big dinner at the Everett Yacht Club. This was probably 10, 15 years ago.

[00:46:21] **HARVEY:** This guy Schwartz—I’ve heard of him but he’s not a relative—in what settings did he pass along the lore of the past?

[00:46:36] **NICK:** He used to come to the union meetings, and he would sit there. And I was very young, didn’t know anything. We had a really good local. We had good longshoremen. Very proud of that. We had as good of crane drivers or shipboard whirley drivers, we could put anybody to sleep. But Orey would always be at the union meetings, and he always wanted to say something, even to the guys who’d been there for quite a while, “You younger guys need to know this.” Then he would talk about a certain subject, maybe “Are you safe on the log ships?” “Is your dock safe?” “Are you taking the port around? Are you showing them everything that’s wrong with maybe the bull heads, maybe the cleats on the bull head?” He always had something every month to bring up to those guys. They would laugh at certain guys, [but] they didn’t laugh at Orey, because when he came to talk to us, he always had something good to say to us.

[00:47:48] **HARVEY:** Did he have historical information as well?

[00:47:51] **NICK:** Yeah, he did. It’s a sad thing, but we’ve got a lot of old history in there that’s in the furnace room. I keep telling the younger guys, “You need to bring those out. Bring those pictures out, put them up on the wall. And then have one of us come in and write on the back of them, if we know who these guys were and what they were doing at this time.”

[00:48:17] **HARVEY:** Anything else, Conor?

[00:48:21] **CONOR:** You kind of touched on this, but I’m curious if there’s any stories you remember about old-timers, or things that you’ve heard about in your local’s history, about the influence of the Wobblies on that local? It’s interesting that the same motto of the Wobblies became the motto of the ILWU, and I wonder about the influence of those old-timers maybe.

[00:48:42] **NICK:** There were stories, and in my ignorance, I didn’t listen to a lot of them guys. I was young and really didn’t even think about it. I didn’t even care. And I wish I would have because I don’t know much about them, other than what I’ve read in a few books. I would like us to pass all this stuff on to—like I say, our local is so young—so they understand these things that happened, the struggles that we go through. I couldn’t go back that far, but I can go back to 48 years that I put in there.

[00:49:24] **HARVEY:** Were there IWWs who were actually ILWU members later on, say, when you first started out? But even then, it’s a long way past—40 or 50 years—since the heyday of the IWW. But were there any IWW members who became ILWU members?

[00:49:42] **NICK:** If there were, I don’t know that.

[00:49:48] **HARVEY:** What have we missed that’s important?

[00:49:53] **NICK:** I think people have to understand. A lot of times, longshoremen get a bad rap for different reasons. Even my wife says, “If something comes in the paper about you, you don’t retaliate.” I says, “That’s not the way we operate.” You’ve got to know us. We’ve got a toughness about us that we can sit down at a table and negotiate, and that’s how we get things done. The days of fighting and doing all that stuff doesn’t work anymore. All it does is make lawyers rich. [chuckles] I can’t explain it, but probably people don’t understand

that the job is unique. To me, it's unique. It's a closeness, a bond that I don't think any other union members have. I really don't believe anybody does.

[00:51:03] **HARVEY:** It is unique. Do you have any sense of why it's so unique?

[00:51:08] **NICK:** I think it's just the closeness. I think part of it you meet once a month in a union meeting, and in our local, even today, it's mandatory that even the B men go to that. They can't talk, but they need to go and learn. Our guys are fined heavily if they don't go to the union meeting. I never agreed to that because I told my local one time when I was a business agent "They shouldn't fine you, but it's your right to come here. Don't give up that right." So we've always had good turnouts. It got a little low when the logs all kind of fell off. Then they'd kind of go away and I'd have to call them and say, "When I put down your dues, I hate to put that extra amount down there, but if you don't show up, I'm going to do it."

Yeah, it's just a closeness. It's a fun job. A lot of laughs, a lot of giggles. Certain stories that I could tell you that I probably shouldn't tell you.

[00:52:24] **HARVEY:** Try one.

[00:52:25] **NICK:** Well, I mean the funny things we did in the old days. Like the old days, you hardly went to work without an old-timer up there had a pint in the back pocket, a bandana around his head with the handkerchief tied back here. "Hey, punks, here comes the load." Just flying down there five decks below. I could tell you one time—since the guy's dead, he won't care—anyway, his nickname was Horse Thief, don't ask me why, but everybody on the waterfront had a nickname—anyway, he had the ship in the yard out like this. I don't know, he must have had too much of that pint, but he flew the pulp over like this and nothing came in the hatch. People kept looking up to see where he was at. All of a sudden, here it came, and the water was just running in the hatch because he put it in the bay. [laughter]

Just certain stories, and that was one of the funniest ones that happened to me, and I had just started. I thought, what? [laughing]

[00:53:43] **HARVEY:** Any other stories like that that you recall?

[00:53:46] **NICK:** Yeah, but some of them I can't repeat.

[00:53:52] **HARVEY:** Should we probe for those stories?

[00:53:57] **NICK:** Probe?

[00:53:57] **HARVEY:** Yeah, sometimes you say you can't repeat, but sometimes that's the best and most colorful story of all sometimes.

[00:54:08] **NICK:** I can remember at one time, I got on a bull, put it in gear, and started to go and it didn't go anyplace. I couldn't out what the hell, so I was there for like five minutes trying to figure it out. And then one of the older A men came over and he was laughing. I said, "What happened? What's going on here?" Well, they had jacked the back of the bull up so the tires didn't touch the floor. There was like this much. It was almost like the tires were smoking with the heat.

[00:54:50] **HARVEY:** That was a joke?

[00:54:56] **NICK:** Yeah, they'd do this all the time to you, especially the younger guys. What else? God, there's so many. One time—I'll go ahead and tell this story—this was me, and I had a six-pack of beer. It was a hot day,

and I took it down in the hatch with me in a log ship, and my partner had this deal like he liked to go up and leave me down there, and he was quite tall. Anyway, a load came in, I unhooked it. I went to grab my beer and the beer was gone. What the heck? Probably shouldn't be telling this story. [laughing] But anyway, he had put it about two feet over my head so I couldn't get to it, and then when he came, he told them to bring a load down and he had them set it right in front there, so he came down and crawled up in the load and he got it. And he said, "I guess this is mine now, huh?" So that was my beer gone. [laughing] But just a lot of funny, funny things happened. A lot of laughs.

[00:56:11] **HARVEY:** I'm not sure but I'll ask it anyway. I think you've kind of covered some of this, but I usually ask at the end, wrapping up, kind of looking back what it all meant, kind of a general statement that you might have?

[00:56:31] **NICK:** I would tell the younger people now, "Listen to the old-timers. Take care of your job," because I think that's starting to slip away a little bit, not just in my local but in the bigger locals I see it. I see it the union meetings aren't being attended very well, and when you're having voting elections now, and half of the one local is voting, you know, in my local, even when there were 150, you voted or you got fined. I don't see that no more. And there's too many people that just are there for the money, the paycheck on Friday. But they've got to wake up because this job, our industry, isn't infallible. They could take us down if we don't stick together. And if we don't fight and keep our rights and keep our manning and keep everything, keep our health and welfare, I mean, this is the greatest union with the best benefits. There's nobody out there that has what we have. People have to realize that. And I hate to say this, but many don't. They just think it's a given. Well, it's not a given. You can go through the past negotiations lately and they have not been easy.

[00:58:10] **HARVEY:** How do we inform the people? How do we get to the people? What suggestion might you have to change that, to get more of the people to come to the meetings, to be active?

[00:58:23] **NICK:** I hate to say fine, because some people would pay \$50 not to go. That bothers me. When you pick up that check on Friday and you look at it, most of the people don't know how much money goes into the pension plan, how much money goes into health and welfare that's not on there. Like I say, they just take it as a given. It's not a given. When the employers are paying \$750 million a year for your health and welfare, and half the people don't even know that. Everybody should know that.

[00:59:04] **HARVEY:** How do we inform the people?

[00:59:07] **NICK:** You have a union meeting. The problem is, half of them aren't there, and it's frustrating. Yeah, it's frustrating. But hopefully, it will get better. This lottery system they've got going on, I don't like it. In the old days we got to pick who were were going to work with. They weren't going to draw somebody's name out of a hat because he got a card from somebody. I don't like it. That's a poor way to hire people, as far as I'm concerned. In the old days, they can say what they want about nepotism, it worked, and we had good workers. I watched dads tell their younger kids, "You'd better do this and you'd better do that and you're better do it right." And it worked better for the employers, so I don't even understand why they want lotteries, other than lawsuits. The courts have taken over. It's sad. I get very irritated because we've always had a good workforce, and I have to say that the 53 people they have in Everett are good kids. I can only think of maybe one who has a little drinking problem and I'm trying to help him. We'll see what happens.

[01:00:33] **HARVEY:** Anything else?

[01:00:36] **CONOR:** This is a small thing that people often talk about, but I'm really interested in hearing about any of the nicknames that people had on the waterfront. I've always wondered how they got that nickname, if you remember.

[01:00:49] **NICK:** All the old-timers had them, more so than the younger guys. I don't see nicknames now. Mine was either Greek, or my old father-in-law, his name was PapaD, and all of a sudden, I got named PapaD. If somebody did something goofy, like on our pegboard—maybe they messed up on the pegboard and put the peg in the wrong hole or something like that—then they got Pegger. Horse Thief. Some of them, I'm not going to say, are not nice nicknames. [laughing]

[01:01:33] **HARVEY:** Some of them are risque, I guess you might say.

[01:01:40] **NICK:** Crude.

[01:01:40] **HARVEY:** Can you remember a few of those? Just a few of them, if you don't mind.

[01:01:47] **NICK:** We had one guy that was called Butthole. I don't think that was very nice and that was his nickname.

[01:01:52] **HARVEY:** How did he get the name?

[01:01:53] **NICK:** I have no idea. He was Butthole before I got there. [laughter]

[01:01:58] **HARVEY:** That was before your time. Not your fault.

[01:02:01] **NICK:** Not my fault, no. I think if I'd have been here, I think there would have been a fight. Or, if that was me.

[01:02:12] **HARVEY:** How did Horse Thief get his name?

[01:02:14] **NICK:** I don't know. He was an old-timer, and he was a hard worker. Dead of winter, he'd wear those t-shirts, just a strap here, like I say, that tank and this thing. I mean, it could be 40, 50 degrees out at night, because he always worked nights, that's all he ever wore driving winches up there. But I don't know how he got his. Johnny was named Stick, and one other guy was named Bullshit. Where they got that from, I don't know but that was his nickname. Of course, we had Bonesy, and he died of cancer.

[01:03:04] **HARVEY:** How did he get that nickname?

[01:03:06] **NICK:** Tall, thin guy. Bender—don't know how he got that nickname. Stroker. I know how he got that name, so I'll leave it there. [laughter] Then there was Nasty, and I know how he got that name.

[01:03:37] **HARVEY:** How did he get the name Nasty?

[01:03:40] **NICK:** He was just a nasty guy all around town, in the bars, wherever he went. Then there was the Streaker. He had to go strip about once a month and run down Hewitt Avenue from bar to the next, for what reason, I have no idea.

[01:04:02] **HARVEY:** That was a natural nickname, right?

[01:04:03] **NICK:** Yeah. Then there was Horny Thorny.



[01:04:11] **HARVEY:** How did he get that name?

I think just how it sounds. [laughter] I'd have to think more, but that's a few of them.

That's great. I think we've kind of covered the waterfront.

[01:04:31] **NICK:** Yeah. You know, maybe we haven't, because there's so many good things that happened on the waterfront. And sad things. I'd have to sit down and just jot little notes. I probably should have done that last night.

[01:04:52] **HARVEY:** What do you mean by sad things?

[01:04:55] **NICK:** Oh, people getting hurt bad, even killed.

[01:05:01] **HARVEY:** Anybody get killed when you were [on the waterfront] ?

[01:05:03] **NICK:** No, I never . . . just before I started, a guy fell off the top of a deckload and they hadn't pulled the logs off yet and he landed there. He died. I think the worst thing I saw was, it was a log ship.

In the old days, instead of having the kind that just fold up like this when the hatch is opened up, you had to take the pontoons off. And when you took them off—and this was the dead of winter and it was icy out—my partner and I took the tarps off. There's five big pontoons covering the hatch, and you always take not the last one but the second one, and set it over here, and one of the Japanese young sailors was [speaking in Japanese] , and what he was yelling about, I don't know, and he took off. We were yelling at him, "Stop! Stop!" And all of a sudden he noticed what had happened and he couldn't stop. He tried to stop but he slid and went down about 65 feet. When we got down there, both his heel bones were sticking through his shoes, his eyeball was over like this, and he was trying to get up. This kid was bleeding profusely. He ended up staying in the hospital for a year. He lived. I don't know how he lived.

One night we had another crew member get decapitated. A wire from the winches snapped and just took his whole head off. I looked and just went the other way. But those are crew members. You see a lot of accidents with your fellow workers. One guy worked in a log ship in Everett about 1968 or 9 and a log rolled up and took the leg off at the knee.

But, like I say, in those days a lot of those things happened, a lot of smaller injuries—well, that's not small—but now, with the containers and even the logs that are 25 tons, 30 tons, you see more deaths.

[01:07:37] **HARVEY:** I think we've kind of got it.

[01:07:39] **NICK:** I hope so.

[01:07:40] **HARVEY:** I think so, yeah. Thank you very much.

[01:07:44] **NICK:** Enjoyed it.

[01:07:45] **HARVEY:** Okay, great.